

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Elaine Kauwenaole Kaopuiki

*"That's all we can hope for is the best. I hope our island is not exploited too, you know. Although I'm going to have to accept the idea of the new changes, I hope it doesn't hurt our island, that's all. I think of her as a person, I don't think of her as an island. If you take care of them, they take care of you. And that's how Lana'i has been to me. She's always been there for us when we really needed her."*

Elaine Kauwenaole Kaopuiki, daughter of William Kauwenaole and Maggie Nakihei Kauwenaole, was born January 11, 1929 in Kō'e'e.

Her mother is originally from Keōmuku. Her father came from Lahaina, Maui to Lāna'i around 1921 and worked briefly for Lāna'i Ranch. He then cleared lands for pineapple cultivation after Hawaiian Pineapple Company purchased the island in 1922. He later returned to the ranch as a full-time cowboy.

Elaine, a lifelong resident of Lāna'i, has fond memories of her life on the ranch and remembers the closeness of everyone living there. She was part of a group that played music and performed the hula for various community and school functions. After graduating from Lāna'i High and Elementary School in 1947, Elaine worked as a telephone operator and as a pineapple field worker. In 1950, she devoted herself to the learning and teaching of hula. In June 1989, Elaine's hālau, Na Hula'O La'i Kealoha, represented Hawai'i at the Smithsonian Festival of American Folklife, held in Washington, D. C.

Elaine is married to Samuel Kaopuiki. They live in Lāna'i City.

Tape No. 16-28-1-89  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Elaine Kauwenaole Kaopuiki (EK)

May 21, 1989

Lāna'i City, Lāna'i

BY: Mina Morita (MM)

[Note: Also present for part of the interview was EK's husband, Samuel Kaopuiki (SK).]

MM: This is an interview with Elaine Kauwenaole Kaopuiki on Sunday, May 21, 1989 at her home in Lāna'i City. The interviewer is Mina Morita.

Okay Auntie, let's start with your full name.

EK: Full name. Elaine Eleanor Kauwenaole Kaopuiki.

MM: Okay. And your birth date?

EK: January 11, 1929.

MM: And where were you born?

EK: Lāna'i nei, up Kō'e'e.

MM: Kō'e'e. And your parents' names?

EK: Oh, my father is William Kaanoekala Kauwenaole and my mother is Maggie Nakihei Kauwenaole. She was born Keomuku and my father was born in Lahaina [Maui].

MM: And how did your father get to Lāna'i?

EK: Ah, that was interesting. After he graduated from Lahainaluna School, he worked as a carpenter and soon after that, he came over to Lāna'i. He just came over 'cause the new thing was happening on Lāna'i at that time, pineapples coming up. So he moved over here, and he started to work for [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company at that time immediately after they opened. So that was 1922. But he started 1921 with the ranch.

MM: I see.

EK: With the ranch first, up Kō'e'e. And when pineapples came, he still continued in the ranching business until they closed down the ranch, then he moved down here [to Lāna'i City].

MM: I see. And then how about your mother?

EK: My mother was born and raised down Keōmuku. My father used to take the mail down to Keōmuku and then get on the boat and go [back] to Lahaina. So he would take the mail down [to Keōmuku] on horseback, late, midnight sometimes. He started off from up here, the Kō'e'e ranch, and go down. The horses knew the trail so well, that even my father didn't have to guide the horse, you know, the horses go down by themselves. But one of the things that the horses were also used to to was turning, diverting their trail because they knew where all the booze were, or the liquor were, that the people used to make, so the horses were quite used to to the trail. But other than that, they would get the mail on time, regardless how many diversions the horses made, they got the mail there on time. And then, that's how he met my mother.

MM: I see.

EK: My father met my mother. So my mother married my dad at the age of sixteen. And my dad was--graduated already, high school, was about twenty.

MM: So when is your anniversary?

EK: My anniversary?

MM: No, your parents'?

EK: You mean when they got married?

MM: Yeah.

EK: I think was June 1925.

MM: I see.

EK: You know, they got married, and then they moved up here.

MM: To Kō'e'e.

EK: To Kō'e'e.

MM: Has your mother ever told you about growing up in Keōmuku?

EK: Always, constantly the kind of life that they lived. As she was growing up, her father was a very strict man.

MM: Who was her father?

EK: John Nakihei. And her mother, of course, comes from Kohala.

MM: And what's her mother's name?

EK: Julia. Her last--her maiden name was Holeso. It was just by chance anyway, how she ever got to Lāna'i. She was married to a Japanese fellow from Kohala, and they moved to Moloka'i. In that process, she somehow must have taken care of this fellow named James Von Oelhoffen. So that was almost like her hānai. And he was a policeman in Lahaina. Her husband used to beat her up, very, very abusive. That's the story related to me from my mother. And so this Von Oelhoffen who was the policeman in Lahaina sailed on a small boat, by himself, to Moloka'i from Lahaina and stole his hānai mother from Moloka'i, and brought her to Lāna'i. And stayed with the family for a while until she met my granddad, and she married him. Now, regardless whether she divorced the other one, I don't know. That part, I don't know, but she married my granddad and had four children. And of the four children, only two survived, the other two died.

MM: Oh. At what ages?

EK: The other two died at birth.

MM: Oh.

EK: And my mother and her brother, John Nakihei, [Jr.], lived to have families, too. He had two boys and one girl. And in 1937, he died, he was crushed between the boat and the harbor of Lahaina. Because a bag of cabbage fell down in the water between the harbor, and he didn't even think about the boat going back and forth 'cause it was tied up already, and the cabbage fell down in the water, and he sort of bent over to grab the cabbage with the hook, and the boat hit the harbor and crushed him. So on the way to the hospital, he died. So that was 1937, I won't forget that because I was in school when they came to pick me up and I was in hysteria because I thought they meant my dad was the one, you know, but it was my uncle. But still then, he meant so much to me, you know. So I never forgot the year, was 1937 when he died. So that left only my mother. Actually, my mother came--the four children came by way of--you see, the people down Keomuku, they never knew the Lord. I don't know if they actually did or not, that's how Ka Lanakila [O Ka Mālamalama] Church started down the beach. Because this minister came here to preach and all the people would run away, you know, in the kiawe. My mother tell me this story.

MM: Who was the minister?

EK: From Hilo, Reverend [John] Matthew. He would come here and preach to the people. And they all run for the kiawe, hide. Who is this man, you know, especially a stranger. When strangers come on the island, our people down there kind of run away and then they come peek, come outside and look who this stranger. But he never gave



up. He always kept on preaching until it went from ear to ear, you know, all this talk about, "Oh, he's a miracle." And then, "He's able to give children." See, my grandmother and grandfather couldn't have children. And they heard that he could give children, so out of this shame, their embarrassment, they approached him and asked him is it true that you can give them children. And this minister said, no, it's not me that can give you the children. If you believe in Him, you can have children. It's no impossibility, you know. So they went with him. This minister made my grandparents fast three days and three nights, and they had that four children. My mother is the last to survive. So my mother always, till the day she died, always said, she never came by way of physical, she came by way of the Lord. She was conceived by the Lord, you know. And so she became ordained. And her being ordained was not going through the process, you know, plan for being ordained, that kind. She was sick and she almost died. And so she told the Lord that if she would drop everything and do the will of the Lord, she'll survive. And she did. So they took her right straight to Honolulu and had her ordained. So it was really a miracle because her kind of being ordained was not planned or anything. She had to be. So she went through and she got ordained. So she held a title till she passed away.

MM: How old was she when she was ordained?

EK: Oh, I think she was thirty-something. And she was just like any ordinary person before that, you know. But she never forgot. She never forgot her place, though, even though she didn't hold that title yet. But even if she had fun, she'd go out and have fun, but she always knew her place until she was ordained. And of course, that was it. She dropped everything, no nothing, the things that tempt people, you know. So that was my mother's life.

MM: You know like, one of the things that she used to do a lot of is quilt.

EK: Yes.

MM: How did she learn how to quilt?

EK: Well, my grandmother, my father's mother, was in her own light a seamstress herself. She loved to do these kinds of things.

MM: This is in Lahaina?

EK: Yeah. And so when she came here, see, my father brought her here to Lāna'i because she was such an innocent thing, and no husband. She lost her husband.

MM: What was her name?

EK: Georgina [Napaepae] Kauwenaole. And her husband, William Kauwenaole, Sr. was a caretaker for the lighthouse. So he would

have to go outside in the waters off Lahaina.

MM: Which lighthouse? Lahaina lighthouse?

EK: Lahaina Harbor. You know that buoy that's way outside there now? Well, in those days, they had to go and put the lantern there. So my grandfather, I don't know if that's the same buoy, but he would have had to go out there at midnight and check that lantern, and in daytime, too, go and put the lantern. And every so often, he would have to go out and check if the light is still on. He was doing that for so many years. And he'd come back all wet, he'd stay with his wet [clothes on]. That's why he didn't survive too long. He died pretty young. So my father never really enjoyed his dad, 'cause he was always--and he drank, too, you know. That's how he was. But my grandmother continually quilt. So when she came here, she brought her talent with her. And my mother began to learn to quilt from her. I think a lot of women on this island learned to quilt from my grandmother, you know. My grandmother was very . . .

MM: This is kind of off the subject, but were there any patterns that were specific to Lana'i?

EK: I don't remember. No, I don't think so. There were patterns, though, that my grandmother liked, and always kept. And she still has it [through] my aunty that has it today. No, but specifically for Lana'i, I don't think so because all of these came from Lahaina. So she brought her patterns from Lahaina. But I am doing things for Lana'i. So I finished a quilt with the help of my mother and named it. La'i Kealoha O Hali'i Lehua, it's for my granddaughter, it's her name. But the pattern is my own.

MM: It's called La'i Kealoha . . .

EK: O Hali'i Lehua. I named it for her.

MM: Oh, is it red?

EK: Could be any color. Red, yes, I would imagine red. I would imagine red because lehua get mostly red.

MM: Mm hmm. Okay. And let's see, we're talking about your grandmother and then, are there any other things that you remember about your mother growing up Keomuku and Kō'e'e?

EK: When they pau school, they had to go pick kiawe beans. Ten cents a bag, you know, she tell me, ten cents a bag and how big the bag!

MM: Those regular burlap bags?

EK: Yeah, big bags! They had to go pick up kiawe beans. She said was so hard for go pick up. But they had to go and do it, every pau school, they go do it because . . .

MM: Was this for the ranch?

EK: Yeah, for the [Charles] Gay people. So she would go pick up as part of her work. And then of course, when she was going to school down Keomuku, Betty's mother was a teacher there.

MM: That's Mary . . .

EK: Mary.

MM: Kauila?

EK: Kauila, yeah. And she would sometimes stay with this teacher. And then Kenneth Emory?

MM: Yeah.

EK: Yeah, he used to come and stay with Mary Kauila, too, in the schoolhouse, and he often writes about my mother, because my mother used to be a beautiful singer. Not my mother, I'm sorry, my grandmother [Julia Holeso Nakihei]. My grandmother and he, in fact, he has her in an excerpt in one of his documents, you know. They would ride the boat to Lahaina 'cause her husband, John Nakihei, used to be the captain on this small boat, they could hear her singing in the front of the boat. And he would relate to her singing like the birds. That's a short excerpt in his book. It touched me when I read that, you know. Which is true. She really sings like an opera singer. I never had the privilege of hearing her, but my mother said in church, she was the highest note singer. So my mother took after her, too, you know. She could sing. My mother could sing, too.

MM: I've never heard her sing.

EK: Oh, she could sing. I didn't know. She hardly ever sang. But she could. And then, of course, my uncle, John, [Jr.], lived down there, too. Both were raised down there. Their chores were one gotta go cut kiawe wood, make ready for the evening. And my mother was the spoiled one, too, she hardly ever worked because she was the youngest. She herself tell me she was a spoiled brat. She always had her way, and her brother get lickens because she gets away with it. But that was part of growing up. She had long hair, too. And all the kids go down there, and they go swimming, eh, and too much swimming, no comb the hair, get plenty ukus. That's part of their growing up, too.

(Laughter)

EK: She said her mother used to comb her hair, and chew the coconuts, and the juice, put on top of the hair, and so come soft and comb, comb, comb.

MM: Oh, the coconut oil.

EK: Yeah, coconut.

MM: How about your earliest memories of Lāna'i, especially the Kō'e'e area?

EK: Beautiful, beautiful. I wish I could live it all over again. We had eucalyptus trees all over, as part of my growing up. It's not like how it is today. It's not like how it was before, too. There was eucalyptus trees all over. It was just thick with trees all over. And that was part of my place to go play. I loved it.

MM: Where did you folks live?

EK: Right in the front of Daddy [Ernest Richardson].

MM: So near the wash. . . .

EK: Near the washhouse. That's where I grew up. But my mother and father, they lived way up by where you folks [the Richardsons] stay now.

MM: Where Henry Gibson used to live?

EK: That's their house. I didn't get to use that place--no, I'm sorry. I did. I was born and had my luau up there, my one-year luau over there. But I don't remember anything 'cause by that time, I moved down. I moved down here [Lāna'i City] temporarily, then I wen move back up to the ranch and we stayed right in front Daddy them. And I stayed there all my [childhood] life. I went to school and did everything up there. Our kind of play had to do with all these trees. I remember so vividly that. It brings back so much memories 'cause we used to (chuckles) play Tarzan on the trees. And then the branches going all over, we'd make houses underneath this eucalyptus trees. And all the playmates I had up there were all these boys like Uncle Sam Shin, Uncle William [Kwon, Sr.], and Mary Gibson, and Betty Lou [Gibson], Marlene Gibson, Jackie Gibson, too, he was one of them.

And then later on in years when we grew up a little bit more, we had the Keliikulis, you know, all them. They all came and lived up there. By that time, we had different things in mind already, with growing up and going to school and all of us graduating from school. But the eucalyptus trees were still there even though I graduated, they were still there. And today, you look at the place, you kind of miss the trees. That's the thing I think about is the trees, 'cause now, it's so barren. The other night I was up there, look around, I say oh my goodness, where's everything, you know.

MM: Besides playing, what else did you folks used to do?

EK: We'd make things a lot. Like now, kids, they buy their toys, you know. But us, we make things. And we enjoyed the things that we make, like stilts. I used to ride stilts a lot. And my stilt was

higher than this house. And I could get on that stilt. Everybody else couldn't get on their stilts, you know. When my father used to make my stilts, I would tell him what I like, and he think I'm crazy. I tell him, "No, I'm not--I want higher than the house." And he would make me one to prove to me that I can't get on the stilt. And I proved to him that I could get on the stilts, so I was the only one that had a high stilt. Then after that, boys started to do that. And then, of course, we played marbles, bean bag, we played that. What do you call that little--you cut it off with the broomstick. You cut the front part in an angle. I don't know what you call that, and then you hit it with the long handle. You hit it and that thing spins around, and in the mid-air while it's spinning, you hit it, and the farthest that it'll go, then you mark it, you know, like that. I forget what you call that. [EK is describing a game called "peewee."] And we make tops, too. We make our own. We don't go buy tops. Like today, they buy tops, and you know, they throw. I used to be crack shot.

(Laughter)

EK: I used to love to play with boys. I don't want to play with girls. They play football, I'm in there, play baseball, I'm in there. And of course, if I don't win, I cry.

(Laughter)

EK: I cry. That's how I get the best of the boys, too. When I think about it, stupid. Then I go bet marbles with them, I lose, I be mad.

(Laughter)

EK: Oh, shucks. But Sam Shin was the only one that really fight with me. The other boys never fought back, you know, but was just Sam Shin the one, me and him fight.

(Laughter)

EK: You try ask him, he tell you. He and I always fight.

MM: How about school? Where was the school and how did you get to school?

EK: Well, I went to school when they had the school up there at the golf course [Kō'ele Grammar School]. Then I transferred. They transferred me down here [Lāna'i City] to where the Little League field is now.

MM: Okay.

EK: They had a long building, and underneath the [Lāna'i] Union Church, was my first school. I actually stayed there for first grade, second grade, and then I transferred down to where the Little League field

is. The whole building had about two, four, six rooms over there. I stayed there from first grade to the sixth grade, and then they [consolidated] all the schools down here. All the old buildings were down here.

MM: Where the [Lāna'i High and Elementary] School is now?

EK: Yeah, right where it is. But they were all old buildings, not the new ones. And oh, you don't know how I wanted to come down to this school so badly. Six years I stayed up the other school, I thought this was the end of the world for me. (Chuckles)

MM: How come they had the schools spread all over?

EK: I don't know. Well, they first started up there.

MM: At the golf course?

EK: Yeah, and my poor mother had to chase me up there, and as soon as she disappeared from the door, I was down there. I couldn't get along with people. I mean, I so shame of people. Not like today children. They so used to with people already, so the kids can go school. Not us. During our days, we were brought up up the ranch, we hardly ever mingled with people down here [Lana'i City], you know. So when it came the first day to go school, ho golly, I thought I was going through hell. I [was] scared [of] people. So my mother would take me, walk up to the school from, you know where Joe Kahaleanu's house is? She would walk me up to the school and leave me there, and I tell her, "You stay right by the door so I can see you." I'm not listening to the teacher. The teacher is farthest from my mind, I'm only looking at my mother. The minute she disappeared from the door, I leave the teacher, I leave everybody and (chuckles) she's down Joe's house with Joe's mother, talking story and waiting for me to pau school. Oh, oh, I stay outside the porch crying, crying, crying. She get so mad with me, she chase me back up the school. The whole day, me and her was going . . .

(Laughter)

MM: Back and forth.

EK: I run down, she chase me up. Run down, she chase me up. The next day, I had to follow my Aunty Halo [Elizabeth Pokipala] to school. My mother told me, "You better go school." So she told my Aunty Halo for take me go school every day from then on. And my aunty is at that age already, she no like young kids follow her, eh. So she tell me, follow behind her. I stay about, oh, I don't know how many feet away from her. I far away, you know. But I make sure I see her, and I go school like that until I got used to to school. Oh, was so difficult. I felt, now when I think about it, so sorry for my mother chasing me up the hill. (Chuckles)



MM: So you folks had to walk to school?

EK: Walk to school. I had to walk until I moved down here.

MM: Living in Lāna'i City?

EK: Yeah.

MM: Maybe we can talk about your father [William Kauwenaole] little bit before we go on. When your father first came, what kind of work did he do?

EK: When he first came here, he worked for the ranch for a while, and then they needed tractor workers for clear out the fields [for pineapple]. So a lot of the Hawaiian boys came down here to work.

MM: And about what year was that?

EK: Nineteen twenty-two. So he cleared out lot of the boulders that they had, cleared out the fields. Ho, some hard work only for sixty dollars a month, and they work about, oh, almost around the clock. And then when they had their paycheck, all went to the store. They had, always empty envelope. They never had money. Everything went to the store, you know. And when he went to ask for fifty cents to cut his hair, they would actually tell him shut up, you know, oh forget it, don't. So they would have to ask their friends to cut their hair, and vice versa that way. That's the only way they could live. That was very, very hard. And then they had outhouses. They had bathrooms, all built in one community. We lived down there [Lāna'i City]. So we had to walk, I would say from here to George Kahooalahala's house to go take a bath.

MM: Mm hmm. So that's about maybe half a mile or so, huh?

EK: Yeah, yeah, to go take a bath and . . .

MM: And use the bathroom?

EK: . . . and use the bathroom. That was far. That was a community facility. Our houses never had anything like that, so we all had to go down there, take a bath, use the bathroom, and come up. Now if you really wanted to use the bathroom at night, somebody had to take you to go to use the bathroom, far. Not until the union [i.e., International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, in 1946] came in, then all the homes started to have their own facilities, but before that, you shared. You go take a bath in the community bath. Everybody did that.

MM: So when your father came in 1922, he lived up the ranch?

EK: He lived up the ranch for a while, yes. And then from there, [he came] down here [Lāna'i City, then] he moved back up again.

MM: Okay. And then when he was working on the Caterpillars, did he live in a dormitory or something?

EK: No. He already married my mother.

MM: I see.

EK: And he moved down here. But no, that was 1925 he moved. But after that, he moved back [to Kō'ele]. But 1922, he already started [working for Hawaiian] Pineapple [Company]. He was back and forth until he brought all his family here, [then] they stayed up the ranch. He told me he brought his cousins. He brought John [Richardson] first, and then John brought Ernest [Richardson], brought all his family. And he brought his mother over here because his mother was [accumulating] so much bills in Lahaina. (Chuckles) He got the garnishee, so he had to bring his mother over here. That's how all our family wen move to Lana'i. And then, of course, he married my mother, so he made Lana'i his home. But, he had to bring his two cousins to Lana'i, and my Uncle John [Nakihei, Jr.], too. They were two rascals. They needed supervision, so (chuckles) my father was elected supervisor for all his family. Had to bring 'em over here so he can keep an eye on them. (Laughs)

MM: And then so when did they move back to the ranch, now?

EK: My father moved back to the ranch . . .

MM: When did they move into the house by Henry Gibson's. . . .

EK: Oh, Henry Gibson, that was the first part of it, when he [EK's father] first moved to Lana'i.

MM: Oh, I see.

EK: He worked for the ranch for a while. And then he moved down here. Then he moved back again. That's how it was with my father.

MM: When did you folks move into the house that was . . .

EK: Now, in front of Daddy's [Ernest Richardson] place? When they wen start building those homes?

MM: About 1937?

EK: About 1930-something, earlier than [1937], earlier than that because I had my cousin Nani in that house with us. She was a little girl, and we were sitting on the bed one night and looking outside the window, she cried. And all of sudden, she called [her] the father's name, and I was so scared. Was late nighttime, and she was about six or seven, I think, so have to be before 1937 when we moved up there [Kō'ele].

MM: This is Nani who?



EK: John Nakihei's [Jr.] daughter. And we used to keep that girl all the time even though the father was . . .

MM: So she thought she saw her father even when he died?

EK: Yeah, he was gone already. We buried him long time [ago]. And she cried, you know, I will never forget that. Make me all goose bumps, too. And I'd run, go call my mother, you know, Nani was crying and she said she see her father. Ooh, spooky. That's why, it was before '37 they wen build that house, then we all move back up there again.

MM: And then, what kind of other work did your dad do for the ranch?

EK: Oh, he used to go round up the cattle, he used to brand cattle, he did everything up there.

MM: How did he learn how to become a cowboy?

EK: I don't know. Being up there, I guess, like Daddy [Ernest Richardson] them all learn.

MM: On-the-job training.

EK: Yeah, all their own job training, you know, I think.

MM: Did he ever ride or help with cattle in . . .

EK: Oh, yes. He used to train horses.

MM: In Lahaina, too?

EK: No. He came here and he learned all that over here. Just like Daddy [Ernest Richardson]. I think they all came here and learn. They all used to train their own horses. Daddy, my father and [Ernest] Keliikuli, they were all horse trainers. In fact, the funny part of it, I used to hear my father say, John Richardson, he has a particular way of training, Daddy has a particular way of training, Keliikuli has a (chuckles), and my father has a particular way of training because the horses has character. Each horse that they train has character. They have certain things that they would do exactly like the master trained them, you know. So they would know which horse was trained by Richardson, or which horse was trained by (chuckles), just by the way the horse acts. And my father would come home and say, over dinner sometime, if the horse pull [to] one side, then they know that's either Richardson's horse or Keliikuli's horse or (chuckles) if the horse just bucks certain way, that's one of these four people's horses. We'd sit down and just laugh because everybody had their own way of training. (Chuckles)

And of course, even though they rode a lot of horses, they also were slaughterhouse experts. They were experts, I tell you. You go

watch them skin. Daddy and John Richardson, my father, Uncle William [Kwon, Sr.], so skillful. Even Keliikuli, very skillful. They start six o'clock, six-thirty in the morning, I think, six-thirty or seven o'clock, and maybe they have to kill four or five cows or about eight pigs. By noon, twelve o'clock, it's done. It's so fast. Sometimes, they compete with one another, how fast they can skin. Terrific. And by the time they finish skinning, they get rollers, and they put the animal on the rollers and then just swish it right through the door. Then the Richard's Shopping Center, and who was the other one, Mermart Store used to come, they go up there, pick up. Yet Lung.

MM: I never heard of that. Oh, Yet Lung Store.

EK: They had Mermart, too.

MM: How do you spell that?

EK: M-E-R-M-A-R-T. Mermart, used to be in where Richard's store is.

MM: I never heard of that.

EK: Mm hmm. They would go up the ranch and pick up their meat and come down. If I still remember vividly was Monday, Wednesday and Friday, I think, was killing day. All these other days, they go out to go round up cattle, bring them in. If those they going to kill, they bring 'em in.

MM: Did you ever go out to work with them?

EK: I used to go a lot. Me and Ethel [Kwon], we were the only two that usually go out with them, you know.

MM: Two women. Two girls.

EK: Two girls. Nah, not women, two girls. And then of course, the boys, sometimes they act so smart, you know. Hit our horse from behind, our horse take off. But my father always gave me tame horse, so, I used to remember riding horse. Oh, so excited, I wen ride that horse so hard. I think about it . . .

MM: So they didn't mind you folks going, tagging along with them? Did they put you to work?

EK: No, not really, but we go work. Mai'a, who was the boss . . .

MM: Which uncle was that?

EK: No, [Ernest] Vredenburg.

MM: Oh.

EK: I don't know if he minded it, but he never said anything, so, me and

Ethel used to go, early in the morning, go six-thirty with the boys go down the beach with the horses. Or else sometimes they take the horses down, and we'd ride down, and then we go round up the cattle. But us, only tag along kind. (Chuckles) Tag along, and we go chase cows when we feel like chasing cows. And then we ride inside Maunalei Gulch. My father would tell me to just drop the rein and let the horse go. I used to wonder why he'd tell me that. He said, "Because the horses know what they doing." And we riding along steep, steep cliff. And you look down, that's cliff down there, and the trail is narrow. And so he would tell me to just drop that rein and let that horse go by himself. Sure enough, the horse take me up to the top. One time we took my sister, and my sister was so scared. So my father told her, "You just drop the rein and let the horse go." So the horse brought her up.

MM: What sister is this?

EK: Arlene, mm hmm. She lives in Honolulu.

MM: Is that Eaton?

EK: Eaton, yeah. But she's never been raised here on Lāna'i. She was given away when she was a little girl, but she came back couple times. And so she would go riding with my father. But my father always used to say, if you're riding along the cliff, especially horses, they ma'a already, cliff. "You don't have to worry about them. They'll take you. But if you start directing them, they may go off the cliff, you know." 'Cause us the one no ma'a, it's the horse. Those days are the best time of my life. You could never replace those days.

MM: Yeah. Let me see. What other memories do you have of the Kō'e'e area?

EK: Well.

MM: You know, what kind of schedules did you folks have?

EK: We didn't really have a schedule, but every family, see, we were all young girls, and there were quite a few of us young girls there. And we soon enough were basketball players, were volleyball players in school. We were also hula dancers, every one of us up there. And so we got together every so often, and musicians, too, as well, and we always got together, and we put on a show. We put on a good show.

MM: Who would you put the show on for?

EK: Oh, let me see. One particular one that we did, we practiced so hard just to put on a hō'ike, just to put on a show, and was in that old gym [in Lana'i City]. All of us come down, and nighttime we rehearse, you know.

MM: And how old were you folks at that time?

EK: Oh, I think I was only about thirteen, fourteen. I was so skinny, they told me, the ugliest dancer because I was so skinny. And there was Kamaile, there was Mary Gibson, Ethel [Kwon], Betty Lou [Gibson], Marlene [Gibson] was little too young, anyway, had some other girls down here that danced, too. But we were the ranch people that put on the show. And then we had the bus to come up, pick us up. Oh, was so nice. With our costumes coming down, you know, to put on the . . .

MM: Who were the musicians?

EK: Uncle Sammy [Kaopuiki], Uncle William [Kwon, Sr.], and Benny Puou, Uncle Biggy [Junior Kaopuiki], Sam Shin, was quite a few of us, you know. And I was a singer sometimes. Sometimes I'm the singer, sometimes I'm the dancer, 'cause us young, eh. We dance. So I could dance sometimes, and . . .

MM: And so did you, did you have a name?

EK: Ranch Serenaders, for the musicians. Yeah, Ranch Serenaders. (Chuckles) Oh, golly.

MM: Well, who taught you how to hula?

EK: Kamaile.

MM: Okay, who's Kamaile?

EK: The one was married. The one is married to Robert, Robert Kauila. That's Aunt Hannah's . . .

MM: Sister-in-law, then?

EK: Yeah. Kamaile her name. She was the one that actually started me off. And then from there, I went to Emma Sharp, and then they had this lady, Mrs. Lindsey, Pua Lindsey.

MM: She used to live here?

EK: Yeah, she was a policeman's wife.

MM: Okay, this is Roselle's [Bailey] mom?

EK: Yeah, Roselle's mother. She wasn't actually my teacher. She needed dancers, so I danced for her, and that's where Emma Sharp came. I didn't dance for Emma either 'cause I already knew how to dance, but they needed dancers, so I went to help out. So it was Emma that told me to teach. I had no inkling of teaching hula. I wanted to sing. I never cared for dance hula. I wanted to sing. But she told me why don't you start a studio here. That's when I really thought seriously, hey, there's no teacher here, you know, and soon enough, I was going to have children, so that's why I started.

MM: So about what year did you start teaching, then?

EK: Hmm, Mapuana was born 1953. I think '50, I think, '50, '51.

MM: Okay, and I'm going to turn this tape over.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MM: So actually prior to you getting married [in 1949], you folks did a lot of entertaining?

EK: Yeah.

MM: And for what kind of occasions?

EK: Well, I used to entertain a lot for campaigns.

MM: Political campaigns?

EK: Political campaigns, more for the Republicans because at one time, this place here was not Democrat.

MM: Must be before the union, I guess, huh. (Chuckles)

EK: There was only Republican. No Democrats on this island, so they needed musicians, so we went. We went, we played, for nothing. Think about it now, sheez.

MM: You work for--you folks usually entertain for free?

EK: Yeah! Isn't that terrible? (MM chuckles.) Now days not going be free. Well, now days, they don't have this kind campaign like they used to have before. And all of the people, all come out and listen. The gym, you know the old gym, was full with people. But you know why, because this politicians, when they come over, they come over with their entertainment, and they get us to entertain, plus their own entertainers, too, you know. And that drew the crowd to come and listen. And of course, most of the time, we make up our own shows. Like June 11, after we have . . .

MM: Kamehameha Day?

EK: Yeah, Kamehameha Day, that night, we have a big entertainment, and the ranch people put on the show.

MM: Did you charge people to come and look?

EK: Yeah, fifty cents, (chuckles) dollar. Or sometimes, it's free. In fact, most of the time. And then one time in school, the school

wanted to make money. And we put on a show, almost like a carnival. They had the sideshow for the Hawaiians. And in the sideshow Hawaiians, was us. (Chuckles) Us high school kids. Not high school, I was maybe only eighth grade, I think. But that time, I never felt so big, you know, wow, I'm an entertainer. And we put on a show, I think, about for Friday night, Saturday night, and Sunday. Three days we put on a show, and we put on three shows a day. We made money for the school.

MM: How did you folks learn your songs, and what kind of songs did you do?

EK: Most were modern hulas. And the kahiko were the simple kind. But in those days, kahiko was not the thing. And in fact, it was close to World War II already, you know. They had this USO [United Service Organizations] kind of thing, so we all entertained, the ranch people, we all entertained for the USO. For the army boys that come here, we entertain them. But was more modern hula. But then after a while when I started to teach hula, it was kahiko. But I only taught kahiko only to those who really was serious about hula. I never gave my kahiko freely 'cause there were girls that come for hula for the fun of it, you know. I don't share that, my kahikos. But today, it's different. Everybody loves the kahiko, and you can see them. That way, you like sharing it, you know. So I share the kahiko today. But before, I don't. I was very leery about sharing my time because they exploit it to the extreme. They don't take care of it. Some things, you keep. 'Cause my kahiko, I learned from 'Iolani Luahine. Until today, I still have the same motion that she taught me, so I teach this to my two alaka'is today, so they're intern. So I make it known to them, "This is something valuable that you learn from the old people, you know, you keep. And hand it down, and don't forget the motion." So those things, they keep. So I have quite a few old ones that I have shared with this two alaka'i, and they have also shared it, too, you know, so I tell them, "All the other kind new kind kahiko, that's okay however you use it. But just be kind to 'em, be nice to 'em. But the old kind kahiko, keep. That's valuable. Someday, somebody's going to pay you good money for that." I learned that from 'Iolani Luahine, you know. So it's good.

MM: Some of the other things up, well, living up at the ranch, you know like, how did you folks used to spend your Sundays, like going--you had a regular church schedule, and what did you do?

EK: When I was growing up, yes, I had to go to church Sundays. My mother and father used to be churchgoers. I was baptized in Ka Lanakila [O Ka Mālamalama] Church 'cause my father was with Ka Lanakila. That's this church now, not now anymore. Used to be . . .

MM: So this stay Keōmuku.

EK: Keōmuku. But it was brought up here, and they had church [services] in the house, and that was by Reverend [James] Kauila. So I was

baptized under Reverend Kauila because I went with my father. But my mother was [Ka Lōkahi O Ka Mālamalama Ho'omana Na'auao O Hawai'i], that church up here [Kō'ele] now. She was raised in that church, Ka Lōkahi. Wait, she started with Ka Lanakila down the beach [Keomuku]. But when she moved up here [Kō'ele], she went with [the] Cockett [family's church, i.e., Ka Lōkahi]. So my mother was going one end and my father was going one end. So after a while, my mother, because she thought her place was with her husband, just changed over and went with Ka Lanakila for a while until they used this church over here for Ka Lanakila. So she was with my father until my father left. And then, of course, she stayed until she left. But actually, she stayed with Ka Lōkahi for many years, for many many years. So that's what we did, for Sundays was going to church.

MM: So which church did you go to?

EK: I go Ka Lanakila.

MM: Ka Lanakila.

EK: Yeah. My father went go Ka Lanakila. You know where, where you folks' old house used to be? That big house up the ranch?

MM: Yeah.

EK: The big house.

MM: Oh, yeah, in there?

EK: Yeah, in there. That was where we held our church [services].

MM: Kauila?

EK: Yeah, was Kauila. That's where the church was, Ka Lanakila Church, you know and so. [Church services were held in the Kō'ele home of James Kauila whenever going to Keomuku was difficult.]

MM: Mm hmm. How about going down Keomuku, now?

EK: Then after a while, we would go down. We would go Keomuku, and then my mother would go with us, too. So she would go church with us down there.

MM: So there was church at three places?

EK: Yeah.

MM: Keomuku, at Kauila's house, and at Ka Lōkahi?

EK: Well, Kauila's place is only when we no use the church down the beach.



MM: I see.

EK: Other than that, Sundays when pau church [in Kō'e'ele], clean yard, do the little things or go house to house and talk story. All the people used to come together, you know, we always used to talk or play music. All us get together underneath that lamppost, the corner post.

MM: Right behind your house?

EK: Mm hmm, right behind my house, and all no more picket fence. They took 'em all off so we can sit down on top the fence.

MM: Didn't have the point on top. (Chuckles)

EK: Yeah. And then we play music underneath that lamppost. That's our meeting place. All the boys and the girls. My father can be sleeping up, and the music going on. He never did come out and complain about the music. Even when we were just having fun out there, and laughing, laughing, laughing, he'd never come out and complain, you know. I guess, just to hear our voices, he knew that we were safe. And all the families in the camp, they knew that we stay home, you know. And we used to have two lampposts. One over there, and one way down by the beginning of that entrance coming into that long lane.

MM: Mm hmm, by--in front of [Simeon] Kauakahi's house?

EK: No. Almost reaching Ka Lōkahi Church.

MM: Oh, okay. I know which one. Yeah.

EK: Used to have a lamppost over there. Okay. The first one comes home, he would turn the light on. And he walks up to the lane, way up to the top, he would turn that light on. And then soon enough when we about ready to go to bed, somebody going come out, turn the light off. Turn that light off, go way down, turn the other light off, and then go home. And then the whole camp sound asleep that night. But that two light, always either on for the evening, when time for go sleep, the light is off. Never is [left] on, you know. It's just a beautiful time.

MM: Were there any songs that you folks used to sing that were Lāna'i songs? Or did people write songs?

EK: No. We never wrote songs, or do I remember anyone writing songs. If they did write songs, they didn't write about Lāna'i. You know, that's strange. Now, they're writing about Lāna'i, but in those days, they never did. And I don't remember singing any Lāna'i song. The only songs that was famous, "'Alekoki," "Kane'ohe," that was the old songs that they used to sing. What other songs they used to sing? "'Alekoki" and that two songs, "Kane'ohe", Vredenburg loved that song. So every time, I had to sing that song to him, you know,



the "Kāne'ohe" and "'Alekokī." Had some English songs I used to sing a lot. [EK sings:] "Oh well I hear the strain of the sweet 'alekokī." That one, and what else? Plenty other songs we used to sing.

MM: Oh, you know, I know the yards were real important over there.

EK: Oh, yes.

MM: Can you describe what the yards used to look like?

EK: Well, I think every yard had 'ākulikuli. It was one of our mainstay of that little community up the ranch. And every yard, when one yard is being clean, the next yard and so on, and so on, and so on. They all clean the yard. It's not competing each other, but to keep the yard nice. If one mow the yard, and they had the old kind lawn mower, you know, ho, hard work kind lawn mower, but when one lawn mow, the next day, another one going lawn mow. Every day, it goes right down the lane. Then when they start picking up the 'ākulikuli, you don't see one weed inside the 'ākulikuli bed. Not like today, you know. Every yard had 'ākulikuli. And they had just the ordinary colors. Never had any fancy color. It was just the very light pink and the dark pink. That's all the two colors that they had. The people up the ranch would make leis. I remember making thirty leis one time for this company.

MM: [Hawaiian Pineapple] Company?

EK: Yeah. Thirty leis, and guess how much one lei cost. Dollar. And then when they got the leis, they wrote back to us, they said the leis got to them all rotten. But how can it be? You know, how can it be rotten? So we didn't get paid for that thirty leis. Oh, I was so angry. But all the ladies up there, they were experts in making leis. They were all good lei makers, every one of them. Even I became--and I was only, what, fourteen. But I used to love making leis, so, I make leis with the ladies, too.

MM: Had only 'ākulikuli or all different kinds?

EK: No, only 'ākulikuli. That was their main thing that they had. They grew other things like gardenias, but they never made leis with the gardenias. But every yard had gardenias, too. Beautiful gardenias. Not too much amaryllis, though. And a lot of fruit trees. Every yard had papaya and bananas. 'Cause my yard had. And oh, plenty bananas growing. Every yard had that, too.

Oh, and another thing, pastime, my mother used to love playing trumps. They go outside, you know where Auntie Hannah's [Richardson] house used to be? Kauakahi used to live there before. Kauakahi, then the Gibsons way up. Well, all the ladies used to meet at Kauakahi's house. They have big round table, and they used to play trumps. Mrs. Ella Kauakahi, she was about, what, sixty-something, and my grandaunt, this was Mrs. [Matilda] Gibson, that was my old grandaunt, she was

about sixty-something, too. And then my mother is the youngest one. That's three. Supposed to be one more. There used to be four ladies, and they play trumps. They can play trumps from the morning till pau hana. As soon as pau hana, they all run home, and act innocent like they've been home all day. (Chuckles) I know. They were playing trumps all day. They're good trump players, though. They never got tired playing trumps. They can play trumps all day, oh. Me, I like go play [outside].

(Laughter)

MM: What about, okay, up there [Kō'ele] you had community bathrooms, too, but was closer to your house [compared to the ones in Lāna'i City].

EK: Oh, yeah, yeah.

MM: So was that situation a little bit better?

EK: Oh yes, much much better. And we all knew each other, too, so it wasn't so bad. And when we go take a bath, it's all family practically, so was great. And we all wait for each other. And that was shower. Was not furo like down here, all furo and hot, hot, hot, the water, and we all had to use the same water. It was difficult down here [Lāna'i City]. But up there [Kō'ele] was shower, you just sit down wait your turn until one pau, and then you go inside. And then we used to, while we waiting, a long chair, and we sit down, wait, wait.

MM: A bench, long chair?

EK: Yeah, bench, yeah. We sit down, we talk story. Talk story till about nine, ten o'clock you know. We no go home. And we go inside there about 7:00 p.m. As soon as we pau eat dinner we go take a bath. We sit down over there and talk story until the last person pau 'au'au, that's about ten o'clock.

(Laughter)

EK: Sometime you pau bathe, you sit down talk story with the rest, you know. We used to have good fun. And then of course, the boys stay on the other side, get one partition across, the boys stay opposite, we talking to them, too.

(Laughter)

EK: Oh, shucks. Good fun.

MM: How did you folks celebrate all the holidays and stuff? Did anybody do anything special?

EK: What holidays, for instance?

MM: You know like Christmas and Thanksgiving.

EK: Oh, yes. Yes. We always had our own luaus up there [Kō'e'ele]. In fact, people down here [Lāna'i City] envy us. But we never thought about these people too much, you know.

MM: People living in Lāna'i City?

EK: Yeah. To me, it was so separate, you know. We had our own thing up there. So when we pau school, we can hardly wait to go home. You feel safe up there. So when was holidays like Christmas, oh yeah, was a big thing. Our parents all get together, suck 'em up. And we have firecrackers [for New Year's]. Oh, the fireworks was just fabulous. We get the fireworks down here, the stores, and from Maui, you know. And was so cheap those days. And we were kids, I would play fireworks all day and all night. Thank goodness though, we've never had any problems like today. I guess we could have had problems, but it wasn't that bad. And the boys, the bigger boys, they get bigger kind fireworks like real big bombs they make. Not make, they buy 'em. Then they hang the fireworks from the tree. Just when it's time for twelve o'clock, they start blowing up all of these. But that was our own thing up the ranch. And I don't know if these people can hear us blowing it up there, but we only used fireworks. We never used guns or anything like that. It was just good fun. And after pau, we get luau. I don't think that we ever went without a luau. If not, somebody's house had one luau, you know. But we all gathered together. Good fun, our holidays.

MM: So the community was very close, then?

EK: Oh, yes, we were very close, every one of us. Right next to me was Sam Shin and his aunty. And next to them was Mary Gibson. And then behind was Pākes. And then Murata [Ichiro Tamura]. He lived up there, too, for a while before they moved down the city and then beach.

MM: When you folks had this activity, did it include everybody else?

EK: Everybody. Oh, yes. Everybody was included. And in fact, if the party was at night, it lasted the next day. We were outside in the yards, you know. Because right in front of the washhouse was a beautiful yard. It was not dirt. It was just all lawn, so if we not there, we're in somebody's yard and continuing the party. But we could act ourselves because we were by ourselves. We weren't with other people from down here [Lāna'i City], like Japanese and Filipinos. No, this was all only Hawaiians up there. And so, this was all [ranch] workers up there, so you felt more close together. Certain people, sometimes they go up there, they envy our yards. They envy our life because we were close, and our yards were clean.

MM: What about the other nationalities that used to live up the ranch?

EK: They were part of us, too. Like Sakamotos and who was the other

one--Henry Fukutani. He, they lived right in the front of us. That was a Japanese, too, family. I think that's the only two. That one, and that Pakē who lived behind. That's it.

(Samuel Kaopuiki, EK's husband, enters.)

MM: Hi Uncle. (Chuckles)

SK: You folks talking story, so I never like barge, so.

MM: Oh, no. It's okay, the microphone's right here. Right next to aunty.

EK: I'm talking about our life, our life up the ranch, how beautiful life we had, yeah, when we were kids up there.

SK: Yeah.

EK: Nice life.

SK: You know in order to, especially me, in order to play with them, I gotta go bat opposite way.

EK: Oh, that's another activity (chuckles).

SK: So I can play with them, if not they say . . .

EK: He cannot play. Because he [normally] hit left hand, baseball. So we tell him, okay, since you hit left hand and he's good, we tell him, you hit right hand.

(Laughter)

EK: So that's why now, he pitch left, he hit right. He no can hit left.

(Laughter)

SK: Every time they gotta go way down the stable go find the ball. (MM chuckles.)

EK: Oh, and our stable was that old, old, old kind stable, all wood stable. But, I felt so close to the stable. Just like the animals were part of me, too. You go inside the stable there, the horse go inside, and it's all dirt. They take the horse inside there, they take off the saddle, they brush the horses down, and all that time, they're talking. The next stall, another cowboy come inside there, takes off his saddle, and he go washing down his horse, or rubbing it down, and talking at the same time. And then they push the horse little further in the front, they get all that stall where they get all the hay inside, and the horses eating it. You can smell all that horses' smell, their hay smell.

SK: Barley.

EK: The barley smell.

SK: The pineapple bran.

EK: Oh, boy. Beautiful.

SK: The black center piece of the pineapple bran.

EK: Beautiful. (MM chuckles.) And then they would tie up their saddle, you know, they pull 'em up, tie up the saddle, and they have a little hall. From each stall, get one hall that goes in the back. Then you go way in the back get the biggest building where get all that barley inside there, oh, that's where you take off the bin, you eat up.

(Laughter)

EK: And you can see the rats running around, too.

SK: We were wondering how come, you know, all the saddle, when they hang 'em up . . .

EK: Yeah.

SK: . . . don't touch the ground. Then after a while, we find out, oh, see, they get the wire coming from the top of the roof, come down, and then they get something so that the rats cannot come down from that on the small wire. And then they tie the saddle on the pommel, they hang 'em up so that the rat cannot go to their saddle. Make sense.

EK: Real terrific, I tell you. Those, ah, was beautiful.

MM: Uncle Ernest [Richardson] told me that all the cowboys used to talk Hawaiian. Did they speak Hawaiian to you folks or . . .

EK: Unfortunately, my father would talk English to me, but he spoke fluent Hawaiian, too, you know.

SK: [Kuniichi] Sakamoto talk Hawaiian.

EK: Sakamoto is Hawaiian, too. He spoke fluent Hawaiian.

MM: Were you discouraged from speaking Hawaiian in the house?

EK: Well, yes. When I was growing up, it's this--now I know, for a fact, it was these Haoles who came here and started this pineapple business, didn't want any confusion as far as the language was concerned. They wanted everybody to speak English. They didn't say you can't speak Hawaiian, but they dropped hints where my father and mother would catch the hints, you know.

SK: So then in school, the kids don't.

EK: In the school, in particular, you got to talk English. So my father thought was right, you know, so he spoke English to me, and he thought was wrong for me to speak [Hawaiian]. Oh, how stupid can they be.

MM: How about when your mother was growing up? Did they speak Hawaiian at home?

EK: Yes, that's why she spoke. My father only learned to speak Hawaiian when he came here because he was brought up in an English[-speaking] family. Of course, his grandfather spoke Hawaiian, but again, never spoke to them. When he came here he made up his mind. This is it. And being with cowboys, you gotta talk Hawaiian so, he learned fast. But everybody else all spoke Hawaiian. Daddy [Ernest Richardson] didn't speak too good, but he knew. He understood. You can't help it. I know, in his case, I don't think he can help it because Hawaiian was around him all the time. So eventually, he would use it, though. So I understand he's using it now, yeah?

MM: Mm hmm.

EK: Good. Good.

MM: So let's see, now what else happened? You went to school, you graduated from Lana'i High, and then what did you do after that?

EK: Well, I went to business school in Honolulu for a while. I didn't finish it, but I went to business school. And then I came back, I worked as a telephone operator. And then soon after that, I met up with him. (Chuckles) He made my life miserable. (MM chuckles.) Nah, I'm only kidding. A beautiful forty years.

MM: Forty years?

EK: Yes.

MM: So when . . .

EK: We got married March 12, 1949.

MM: Oh, I see.

EK: Up at the ranch, at that Ka Lōkahi Church.

MM: I see.

EK: Under Rev. [Robert] Cockett. He married us. And we lived up there for a little while, and then when they closed down the ranch, then we moved down here. And then we stayed in my mother's house, my mother and father, for a while until this house became available, so we bought this house.

MM: How did you folks feel about the ranch closing down?

EK: You know, the first time when they told us that they was going close down the ranch, it was so hard. My father took it very, very hard. He didn't want anything to remind him of the ranch. He gave away his saddles, seven of them, he gave away. I felt, I was so hurt because . . .

MM: After the ranch closed, he never went ride horse again?

EK: No, he never. He gave all his saddles. I told him, at least, I like keep one saddle, so. I know today, Joman [i.e., Albert "Joman" Reinicke, EK's cousin] get one. That's the one I used to use all the time. Chang get all six. So I don't know what they did with all the saddles.

MM: Harriet Chang?

EK: Yeah. My father gave it to her father.

MM: Who was her father?

EK: Ah, I don't know. We used to call him [Young] Chang. The mother was Phoebe Chang. I don't know if he's still living or if he's gone already. So no, my father never rode. And my father used to be good in making whips, making saddles. And, I think Ernest learned a lot.

MM: From him?

EK: Yeah, learned a lot, and John [Richardson], too. The whips, my father used to be so good in making whips, ho. But that's the story.

MM: After your father left the ranch, what did he do?

EK: They came down here for pineapples. He was transferred.

MM: And what did he do for [Hawaiian Pine]?

EK: Oh, he was luna until he retired and passed away. He was a luna. We moved down immediately. He didn't want anything to remind him of the ranch. That's how hurt he was. He was so hurt. His life, half of his life gone because that's all he know was the ranch. And he loved the ranch life, you know. So when they took that away from him, he never like nothing that reminds him of the ranch. And another thing, he never like horses. I told him I wanted a horse. He said he don't want because he don't believe in tying up horses. He says, "No, horses need freedom. They need pasture. They need to be free, not tie them down," you know. Because when they first wen close down the ranch, the people had to tie their horses, you know, so they never give that pasture up there, not until long after that, and they would fight for the pasture. But other than that, they had to tie down the horses, then stake them all out. And he said he can't see that, you know. He said, "No, I don't want no horses." That's why he never had horses. But now, at least they can let go



the horses, but my father had a different thinking.

MM: Let's see. Okay, so after--okay, let's go back. You folks moved down here, and you were telephone . . .

EK: Telephone operator for a while, and then I worked outside the [pineapple] field. And I was also hula instructor first, before I went outside in the field. Then I quit that one, and I concentrated on teaching hula.

MM: And have been doing it ever since.

EK: Ever since. Worked for the state in the culture and arts [State Foundation on Culture and the Arts] for a while, and then now, of course, I'm still teaching hula, but I work Club Lāna'i, too.

MM: So, I saw Rita. We went to O'ahu on the same plane one time, and she was saying that you were given several chants about Lāna'i that . . .

EK: Yes.

MM: Where did they come from?

EK: Marvelous. Well, it was from John Kaimikawa. John Kaimikawa knew this woman who was ninety-two years old, and he was only seventeen. Now, I forgot what her name was, but by chance, he was raising ti leaves, all different kinds of ti leaves, and it had to do with the old, old, old traditional stuff. And he wanted this [particular] ti leaf, and the name of the ti leaf was kahuna ti leaf. It's green. And one day he passed this yard, and was plenty in the yard, this ti leaf. So he wen go over there to the house, knock the door. He wanted one kumu, he just wanted one plant, he wanted to plant it. So when that woman opened the door, it was the ninety-two-year-old woman. And this woman told him, all of a sudden, "You are my answer. You will learn to do the hula. I will teach you all there is to learn of the kahiko." And so, oh, he was so happy. But he had no intention of becoming a hula instructor himself, you know. But he went. He never told his mother and father where he was going every day for learn hula. He was going to her for learn these kahikos.

MM: Where was this?

EK: In Honolulu. I don't know what part of Honolulu. Anyway, he was going for several months. Then, he said one day, his school was going to the Mainland. So he went to tell her that he'll be gone for two weeks, then when he comes back, he'll continue the hula. But she told him, go. She told him, bye, you know, like that. But he never knew what she meant by bye, you know. When he came back, he went to the house and knocked the door and nobody opens the door. But the neighbor came and told him that the woman died, the ninety-two-year-old woman. But before she died, she gave him about



150 chants, all poems, all written words, you know. And in this, had chants of Lāna'i. And so he gave me three chants. One was for the wind, one was for the rain, and one was for Maunalei. And of the winds, they talk about all different kinds of winds.

MM: Lāna'i winds?

EK: Yeah. It's inside that. If you want to see it, you read it, you'd be so amazed. They're all different winds, you know. Get one wind that is na, N-A, encompasses all the winds of Lāna'i. But if you go in different district, there is one different wind, but get the names for all these different winds. And out here someplace, you notice when the wind blows, the red dirt go all the way down to the beach. Have it in there, too. It's amazing. I had goose bumps. Then again, he has the rain, all different, by their names, too. So he made the motions to Maunalei, and so I'm supposed to make the motions to the other two, the rain and the wind. So someday, I hope I can make that, the motions to the two. Because you know, every island, every island, they have names to their winds. And I used to wonder what's the names of our winds here. And this boy brought this chant to me. Oh golly, I was so amazed I tell you. It's wonderful to note all these winds.

SK: And one chant get all the forest, get in the chant, the trees . . .

EK: Name, name of the trees.

SK: . . . name of the trees are all out here.

EK: It's all inside that chant. So we went out, we took him out one day. And it was raining, raining soft, and the field was so muddy. That's the time we had that big rain before that. But that day, was just drizzling kind rain, and the wind was blowing and we took him out. Ho, was so inspiring because it just fit, you know, so fitting. And we reach up there, we took him go see the trees, that particular tree that was in the chant. Oh, was nice.

MM: Mm hmm. So all these were traditional chants then . . .

EK: That is traditional.

MM: . . . that were handed down.

EK: That was traditional. So now, that's why he gave me the chant. He didn't feel it was his chant because that's not his island. So I said, "Oh, thank you so much for thinking of me." Then he said, "You make the motions to this chant." Moloka'i is his place, so he keep the Moloka'i chant. So I kind of wonder if this woman is not part of Moloka'i and Lāna'i, you know. Because how did she get all these chants if she's not from Lāna'i and Moloka'i, because she has chants of these two islands. Amazing, yeah?

MM: So you, are you going to do any of them for this [1989] Smithsonian

Festival [of American Folklife in Washington, D.C.]?

EK: No, no. Oh, Maunalei yes. Maunalei, we're going to do with the kālā'au. Yeah, we're taking that with us. But the wind and the rain, no, I haven't started yet. I hope to start as soon as we pau with the Smithsonian. We come back and relax, and I'll probably do that. I want to do that, at least I can leave that for my two alaka'is, you know. They can use it forever. That's one of the, I think, the most beautiful gift that was ever handed down to people of the hula industry for Lana'i. That's terrific. Really great.

MM: And historic, I mean, if he has all the names . . .

EK: Yeah, oh. I mean, this would be good not only for hula, but for people like you folks who wants to know a particular wind by its name. You know, isn't it amazing that the Hawaiians who lived before in ancient times were very poetic, although they never wrote anything down or they never drew anything, but they sang it or spoke it.

MM: Okay, one of the things that I wanted to close up with was, how do you feel about all the changes that are happening right now?

EK: Well, we hope for the best. That's all we can hope for is the best. I hope our island is not exploited too, you know. Although I'm going to have to accept the idea of the new changes, I hope it doesn't hurt our island, that's all. I think of her as a person, I don't think of her as an island. If you take care of them, they take care of you. And that's how Lana'i has been to me. She's always been there for us when we really needed her.

And God gave us a very nice place to live, and hope that whatever happens, whatever transpires on this island, it'll be good for everyone, that everybody benefits. Now that they have this new changes, new hotels coming up, new things coming in, too. I hope it's for the good of everyone, not just particular people. That's what I'm hoping for. But you can't help but go back and think about your, or my days as youngsters 'cause that's going to lose. It's going to lose--I cannot.

Now I'm up there at Kō'ele ranch and I'm looking at the new hotel [The Lodge at Kō'ele], I look around the place, I forget what things were happening, you know. You can readily see some of the things, but you'd like to picture it. It's so far away, now. But for the new generation, I know they're happy. This new generation coming up, they're looking forward to the jobs that they can acquire, and that kind of things. And I feel glad for them, that now they don't have to leave home, they can work here and raise their families here. That's all we can hope for.

MM: Okay. Well, thank you Aunty.

EK: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW

# **LĀNA'I RANCH**

## **The People of Kō'ele and Keōmuku**

**VOLUME I**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

**JULY 1989**